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SUMMARY RECORD OF THE 8th MEETING

Chairman: Mr. TSHERING (Bhutan)

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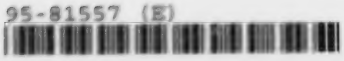

The meeting was called to order at 3.20 p.m.

AGENDA ITEM 103: ELIMINATION OF RACISM AND RACIAL DISCRIMINATION (continued) (A/50/18, A/50/425-S/1995/787, A/50/467, A/50/468, A/50/476, A/50/493)

AGENDA ITEM 104: RIGHT OF PEOPLES TO SELF-DETERMINATION (continued) (A/50/485, A/50/390 and Add.1, A/50/407)

1. Mr. RATA (New Zealand) said that, following the success of the South African people in dismantling apartheid, the international community, which had contributed to that success, should take inspiration from the South African example and make a concerted effort to combat the new forms of racism which had been emerging in other parts of the world. New Zealand condemned the practice and consequences of "ethnic cleansing" in the territory of the former Yugoslavia. It was vital that investigations into those abuses should be pursued and that the individuals responsible should be made to face international justice before the Tribunal that had already started to operate in The Hague. Similarly, with respect to the systematic slaughter of thousands of innocent people in Rwanda simply because of their ethnic origin, longer-term initiatives had been taken in response to that manifestation of racism, including the establishment of the International Criminal Tribunal for the Prosecution of Persons Responsible for Genocide and Other Serious Violations of International Humanitarian Law in the Territory of Rwanda. If, however, Member States were firm in their resolve to bring the alleged perpetrators of acts of racism both in Rwanda and in the former Yugoslavia to justice, they should, as a matter of urgency, pay their assessed contributions in that regard and cooperate fully to permit the full investigation of the suspects and their handing over for trial.

2. With respect to the report of the Special Rapporteur on contemporary forms of racism, racial discrimination, xenophobia and related intolerance (A/50/476) New Zealand encouraged the Special Rapporteur to continue to coordinate his activities closely with all relevant mechanisms of the United Nations, including the Commission on Human Rights, the United Nations High Commissioner for Human Rights and the Committee on the Elimination of Racial Discrimination.

3. New Zealand, which was a multicultural, multiracial society, with its own indigenous population, recognized that it was still not completely free from the racial discrimination, which was a consequence of the country's history. The Government of New Zealand, however, had a strong political commitment to ensure that equality and non-discrimination became a reality in its society. In that regard, he recognized the important work of the Committee on the Elimination of Racial Discrimination, which, in response to the tenth and eleventh consolidated reports submitted by New Zealand in August, had provided a number of concluding observations.

4. In 1992, New Zealand had joined in the decision of States parties to amend the Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Racial Discrimination in order to place the Committee on a more secure financial footing, and it had already ratified the relevant amendments. Since the amendments needed to be accepted by

two thirds of the States parties in order to enter into force, New Zealand urged other States parties to follow its example.

5. Mr. EVRIVIADES (Cyprus) said that much remained to be done in the effort to combat racism. General Assembly resolutions relating to the Third Decade to Combat Racism and Racial Discrimination provided a framework for action that should be adopted in that regard. The Third Decade should be viewed in the context of the Plan of Action for the Decade for Human Rights Education, the Programme of Action for the Decade for the World's Indigenous People and the Vienna Declaration and Programme of Action, and also in the context of sustainable development. Efforts should therefore be made to ensure complementarity between those plans and programmes of action and to give the highest possible political priority to the goals of the Third Decade.

6. Cyprus urged those countries which had not yet ratified the Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Racial Discrimination to do so. It also urged States parties to the Convention to make the requisite declaration under article 14 to enable direct communication of complaints from individuals or groups of individuals who claimed that their rights under the Convention had been violated by a State party. It was also important to request Governments to agree to the amendment to the Convention whereby funding for the Committee on the Elimination of Racial Discrimination would be provided from the regular budget of the United Nations.

7. With respect to the situation in Cyprus and to the final concluding observations contained in the report of the Committee on the Elimination of Racial Discrimination (A/50/18) concerning the Turkish occupation of part of the territory of Cyprus, he pointed out that Turkey had violated with impunity all the international covenants and human rights instruments by maintaining its invasion and occupation of 37.6 per cent of the northern part of the Republic of Cyprus for 21 years. One third of the total population and 80 per cent of the population of the occupied area had been forcibly expelled from their homes and properties by the invading Turkish army simply on account of their race. The policy of "ethnic cleansing" applied by the occupying Power was clearly an act of racial segregation, discrimination and neo-apartheid. Furthermore, Turkey refused to allow even a single refugee to return to his or her home, or to account for the fate of 1,619 missing Greek Cypriots. The Greek Cypriots and Maronites in the occupied part of Cyprus were discriminated against solely on the grounds of ethnic origin. The Turkish community had also suffered from the occupation since its population had been reduced from 120,000 inhabitants in 1974 to only 80,000 as a result of massive emigration. The continuing plundering of the cultural heritage of the Greek Cypriots and the changing demographic structure of the area under Turkish military occupation through massive importation of settlers were two additional characteristics of the unacceptable situation created in Cyprus through the force of arms. If the international community had taken effective measures in 1974 to prevent what had transpired, the similar deplorable acts witnessed in the territory of the former Yugoslavia and elsewhere might not have occurred. If the United Nations resolutions in support of the sovereignty, independence and territorial integrity of Cyprus had been enforced, other recent acts of unlawful international aggression might have been avoided. Bad precedents, when tolerated and condoned, tended to be repeated.

8. On the question of self-determination, his delegation supported the right to self-determination of nations and peoples under colonial rule and foreign occupation as a principle of international law and as a universal right recognized by the United Nations. However, partial views and misconceptions of the right to self-determination could encourage separatism based on ethnic considerations. The violation of the right to self-determination or its abuse would lead to international anarchy and chaos since very few States would escape its effects.

9. Mr. HAMIDA (Libyan Arab Jamahiriya) expressed his concern at the unleashing of various forms of racial discrimination. In various regions of the world, theories of racial hegemony had surfaced which had created new hotbeds of racism, sometimes covert and at other times explicit. In some countries there had been calls for the establishment of racist gangs similar to the Nazi and Fascist groups which committed acts of terrorism against minorities, foreigners and immigrants and, regrettably, some of those groups were protected by the law. The report of the Special Rapporteur on contemporary forms of racism, racial discrimination, xenophobia and related forms of intolerance (A/50/476) included a number of examples of such activities. With respect to the Third Decade to Combat Racism and Racial Discrimination, it was important to implement the programmes, provide sufficient funding and ensure that all States had the political will to fulfil their commitments.

10. With respect to the question of self-determination, the increase in the membership of the United Nations from 51 to 185 States was proof of the many successes the Organization had achieved. Efforts must, however, continue in order to obtain self-determination for all peoples under foreign domination. Such was the case of the Palestinian people, who had the right to establish an independent State covering the entire territory.

11. At the international level, interference in the internal affairs of States continued to impede the exercise of the principle of self-determination. The policy of threats applied by major Powers against small States jeopardized the independence of the latter and was an obstacle to the right of peoples to self-determination. The increasing use of mercenaries, as well as their training and funding, was proof that such activities were on the rise and that they only served to aggravate regional tension and threaten the independence, sovereignty and territorial integrity of States. The Libyan Arab Jamahiriya had faced such circumstances in the past and currently witnessed the conduct of the United States, which welcomed persons fleeing the country, as well as extremists from other countries, and trained them in the use of weapons to commit acts of sabotage that violated international law. The Libyan Arab Jamahiriya condemned all forms of interference in the internal affairs of States, affirmed the right of States to self-determination and urged all States to refrain from harbouring mercenaries and to respect the sovereignty of other States.

12. Mrs. AHMED WAHBI (Sudan) said that, in dealing with the item on racial discrimination, efforts of the international community had previously been focused on apartheid; since that scourge had been eliminated, attention should focus on new forms of discrimination in the world such as racism, xenophobia, selectivity in the granting of assistance, and so on. Those new phenomena had

caused serious tension in the world and threatened to undermine mutual respect among cultures and peaceful coexistence.

13. Since the establishment of the United Nations, many States had exercised their right to self-determination, achieved independence and become Member States. Sudan considered that the countries that had the right to self-determination were those under the colonial yoke or under foreign occupation and that that right could not be invoked as an argument in favour of the disintegration or dismemberment of sovereign States. Consequently, the Sudan agreed with the position of the African countries which had decided, as early as the 1960s and within the framework of the Organization of African Unity, that the frontiers inherited from the colonialist era should be maintained, since to do otherwise would have meant destroying African unity and would therefore have constituted a threat to international peace and security. Her delegation wished also to reaffirm its steadfast position regarding respect for the human person, since the human person was the basis of society. Dignity and respect for all rights were an integral part of the Islamic religion.

14. With regard to the use of mercenaries, her delegation agreed with many, but not all, of the conclusions set out in the report of the Special Rapporteur (A/50/390). In referring to the Sudan, the Special Rapporteur highlighted problems experienced in the south of the country. Those uprisings that had occurred were due to the activities of persons who had initially professed a Marxist, communist ideology which had earned them the support of certain countries of the Eastern bloc. Since the collapse of that bloc, those groups had changed their ideological orientation and currently, as propaganda to attract world sympathy, claimed to be a Christian majority under subjugation. The citizens of the southern part of the Sudan represented 20 per cent of the Sudanese population; 18 per cent of them were Muslim, 17 per cent were Christian, and the rest practised local religions.

15. There was no doubt that the use of mercenaries prolonged wars and increased instability and that trafficking in weapons threatened the lives of innocent citizens. The Sudan had had first-hand experience of such a tragedy based on the assistance given by the Eastern bloc to insurgent groups, and had made a huge effort to overcome the problems persisting in the south.

16. With reference to paragraph 44 of document A/50/390, she said that, while her delegation agreed with the description of the uprising in the south of the Sudan as having been led by a guerrilla force, it disagreed with the statement that the Government's intolerance had led it to perpetrate acts of violence against those groups. The Special Rapporteur should be aware of the fact that the Sudan, based on its culturally, ethnically and religiously diverse society, had adopted a federal system of government under which the country was divided into 26 provinces governed by citizens elected by free and direct suffrage; that 9 out of 10 local governments in the south were run by citizens from those regions; that the Government of the Sudan had on more than five occasions declared a unilateral cease-fire; that on more than five occasions it had decreed a general amnesty for the insurgents and had invited them to lay down their arms so that they could be integrated into society and that, in its efforts to resolve the problems of the south, the Government had chosen the path of peace.

17. In the same paragraph 44 of his report, the Special Rapporteur had referred to the existence of paramilitary training camps which the authorities had not taken any steps to prevent. In that regard, it was important to clarify that the camps established under government auspices were camps for compulsory military service by Sudanese nationals who were defending their territory. Those camps had been visited on numerous occasions and the Sudan was prepared to receive anyone who wished to do so.

18. The Sudan, with its widely diverse cultures, ethnic groups and religions, was an example of peaceable coexistence. That very diversity, which was a source of enrichment for humankind, was an important factor since, far from dividing the nation, it gave it cohesiveness.

19. Mrs. SHARFMAN (Israel) said that the principle of equal rights and self-determination of peoples was one of the fundamental principles of the Charter of the United Nations. While much progress had been achieved with respect to the issue of the elimination of all forms of racism and racial discrimination, much still remained to be done. In the report of the Special Rapporteur to the Commission on Human Rights in February 1994, 50 years after the foundation of the United Nations, the end of the Second World War and the holocaust, anti-semitism was described as a form of racial discrimination which had led to one of the greatest scourges that the world had known in the past and continued to experience.

20. Israel viewed with great concern the recent attempts by extreme right-wing elements to use cultural relativism as a justification for their racism and segregationism. That only led to further division and hatred between peoples. Regrettably, those extremist views were gaining popularity around the world and Israel called upon States Members of the United Nations to take active measures to combat the rise in intolerance.

21. With respect to the tragic events in the territory of the former Yugoslavia in the form of "ethnic cleansing", Israel, which had extended humanitarian aid to the refugees and victims, fully supported international efforts to resolve the conflict. It welcomed the measures taken by Governments and intergovernmental organizations in areas such as education in human rights and other measures to combat racism, xenophobia, anti-semitism and intolerance, and, in particular, the official recognition of the evils of racism and anti-semitism.

22. Under section 7 of the basic law of the Israeli Parliament (Knesset), parties espousing a racist ideology were banned from participating in elections to the Knesset. That, among other measures, together with Israel's treatment of non-Jewish citizens, were a source of pride, since all enjoyed full personal, religious and civil rights like those of any Israeli citizen.

23. In recent years, Israel and its neighbours had made great progress in their efforts to achieve a comprehensive peace in the Middle East. On 26 October 1994, Israel and Jordan had signed a peace treaty ending a 46-year state of war between the two countries. More recently, on 28 September 1995, Israel and the Palestine Liberation Organization had signed the Interim

Agreement which provided for the election of a Palestinian Council and for the withdrawal of Israeli troops from 6 towns and 450 villages in the West Bank.

24. The Arab-Israeli conflict would, however, come to an end only when peace treaties had been signed with all Israel's neighbours. Once again, Israel called upon Syria and Lebanon to take an active role in the peace process. It was vital to seize the historic opportunity to move towards a new Middle East, one without warfare, hatred or division. The peace process in the region remained fragile. Israel urged the Third Committee not to adopt resolutions that might prejudice negotiations between Israel and its neighbours, since that would only poison the soil in which the peace process was attempting to take root. On the fiftieth anniversary of the founding of the United Nations, it was incumbent upon all States to transform into reality the principles set forth in the Universal Declaration of Human Rights.

25. Mr. VALENCIA (Ecuador) said that the main contribution of the Committee on the Elimination of Racial Discrimination was its influence on the States parties to the International Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Racial Discrimination through the dialogue that took place when their periodic reports were being considered. The Committee had succeeded in identifying many latent and covert forms of racial discrimination that were not institutionalized or the result of official doctrine. No country was exempt from the phenomenon of discrimination, which had a variety of causes.

26. Despite the efforts of the international community and the Committee in particular, racism, racial discrimination and xenophobia, inter alia, persisted and had taken on alarming proportions in many countries, as in the case of "ethnic cleansing" in the former Yugoslavia. The Committee had therefore attached prime importance to article 4 of the International Convention. However, the provisions of the article had not yet been universally implemented owing to inadequate legislation or shortcomings in the measures adopted for the purpose. The Committee had drawn the attention of States to the importance of teaching, education and culture, in accordance with article 7 of the International Convention, as powerful tools for combating racial discrimination and promoting harmony and understanding between diverse groups.

27. Although the Committee based its work on the consideration of reports and other information supplied by States parties, States unfortunately often failed to comply with their obligation to submit reports at the intervals established by the Convention. Indeed some had not even submitted their initial report. It should be added in that connection that in some reports racial or ethnic distinctions had been mixed with religious or political opinions. Moreover, the text of the Convention offered little guidance with respect to differentiation between ethnic and political motives, an issue compounded by the way in which racial discrimination was defined.

28. The Committee had decided that the prevention of racial discrimination, in particular early warning and urgent procedures, should feature as a permanent item on its agenda. The Committee had been applying such procedures at its recent sessions with satisfactory results. Alongside those mechanisms, and also with encouraging results, the Committee had introduced the practice of sending good offices missions with the consent of the State party concerned and had also

contributed to the work of the Decades to Combat Racism and Racial Discrimination and the world conferences.

29. It was the Committee's practice to issue a statement, on concluding its consideration of the reports submitted by States parties, concerning the progress made and the difficulties encountered by the State party in complying with the obligations established by the Convention. It also drew attention to the principal subjects of concern and made relevant recommendations. The concluding observations reflected the collective opinion of the Committee members and offered guidance for follow-up action by the State party and the Committee's supervisory work. It collaborated with the Subcommission on Prevention of Discrimination and Protection of Minorities and had maintained useful contacts with a number of special rapporteurs and with the Commission on Human Rights and other bodies.

30. An innovative mechanism introduced by the International Convention was that provided for under article 14. As at 18 August 1995, only 22 States parties had made the declaration required to give effect to the article in their territory. With regard to universal implementation of the Convention, it should be noted that some States with major international influence were not yet parties to the instrument. Unless some new initiative were taken, universal accession would not be achieved by the year 2000.

31. With regard to the right of peoples to self-determination, Ecuador wished to express deep satisfaction at the conclusion of the agreements between Israel and the Palestinian National Authority that would allow the Palestinian people to exercise its right to self-determination. The agreements also provided for the return of territories occupied by force, a principle of international law that Ecuador viewed as a fundamental requirement for the peaceful coexistence of nations. Ecuador again urged States to facilitate implementation of the principle of self-determination by peoples still subject to colonial or foreign domination.

AGENDA ITEM 105: SOCIAL DEVELOPMENT INCLUDING QUESTIONS RELATING TO THE WORLD SOCIAL SITUATION AND TO YOUTH, AGEING, DISABLED PERSONS AND THE FAMILY (A/50/3, A/50/84-E/1995/12, A/50/114, A/50/156, A/50/163, A/50/181-E/1995/65, A/50/215-S/1995/475, A/50/254-S/1995/501, A/50/370, A/50/374, A/50/425-S/1995/787, A/50/454 and 473)

32. The CHAIRMAN drew attention, at the opening of the discussion on item 105, to draft resolution A/C.3/50/L.2 entitled "International Year of Older Persons: towards a society for all ages", which the Economic and Social Council had recommended to the General Assembly for adoption, and noted that measures related to the draft resolution would be adopted in due course.

33. Mr. KRASSOWSKI (Assistant Director of the Division for Social Policy and Development of the Department for Policy Coordination and Sustainable Development) recalled that the General Assembly decision to convene the World Summit for Social Development had been taken in response to a draft proposal submitted by the Third Committee three years previously. At the current session, the results of the Summit and the follow-up action proposed would be

discussed by the General Assembly in plenary meeting. The Committee would therefore be considering only those documents relating to agenda item 105.

34. Introducing the interim report on the world social situation (A/50/84), he pointed out that section II contained a draft framework for the report on the world social situation to be submitted in 1997. He invited members of the Committee to review the draft framework, especially in the light of the decisions adopted at the Summit. The document concerning monitoring of the implementation of the Standard Rules on the Equalization of Opportunities for Persons with Disabilities (A/50/374) incorporated the report by the Special Rapporteur on that matter. It should be noted that the Commission for Social Development had requested that the report and the responses from Governments to the Special Rapporteur's preliminary questionnaire should be circulated, under agenda item 105, as a document of the General Assembly. In that context, the document concerning implementation of the World Programme of Action concerning Disabled Persons (A/50/473) reported on the progress of efforts to ensure the equalization of opportunities and full inclusion of persons with disabilities in the various bodies of the United Nations system, in accordance with General Assembly resolution 48/95.

35. Turning to the report on the observance of the International Year of the Family (A/50/370), he drew attention in particular to paragraphs 135 and 136 containing specific proposals on possible follow-up to the Year. Turning to the question of ageing, he said that the Secretary-General's report on a conceptual framework of a programme for the preparation and observance of the International Year of Older Persons in 1999 (A/50/114) suggested as theme for the Year "Towards a society for all ages" and, to ensure that priority attention would be given to the situation of older persons, that its objective should be "promotion of the United Nations Principles for Older Persons".

36. Lastly, he noted that the draft world programme of action for youth to the year 2000 and beyond had been in gestation for a number of years and had been the subject of intense effort on the part of the Working Group of the Economic and Social Council. He understood that a draft text would be submitted to the General Assembly at the plenary meetings in late October 1995. It was to be hoped that the programme of action would reaffirm the concern of the United Nations and of Governments to improve the situation and recognize the role of young people in the world.

37. Mr. FERNÁNDEZ (Spain), speaking on behalf of the States members of the European Union, referred, in the context of social development, to the work of the United Nations concerning persons with disabilities. The Standard Rules on the Equalization of Opportunities for Persons with Disabilities set out important practical measures to achieve those equal opportunities and to remove barriers which restricted or ruled out the full participation of those persons in society. Various international conferences had supported those Standard Rules, stressing the need to develop strategies for their implementation. The European Union wished to emphasize the need to monitor the application of the Rules at the national level, and strongly supported the work, in the framework of the Commission for Social Development, of the Special Rapporteur, particularly his recommendations on the need to offer more advice and assistance

to developing countries in their efforts to apply the Standard Rules, as well as to focus follow-up activities on certain areas.

38. However, only 42 countries had submitted replies to the Special Rapporteur's questionnaire; the European Union urged a greater response by States and non-governmental organizations to the second questionnaire on the implementation of the Standard Rules. Governments should also supply adequate finance for the activities of the United Nations concerning persons with disabilities, including the work of the Special Rapporteur. To reflect the importance the European Union attached to that area of social development, he pointed out that, by means of the Helios II programme and its predecessors, the European Union had for some years been actively involved in providing a favourable environment for persons with disabilities.

39. The European Union had studied with interest the report of the Sec ary-General on the observance of the International Year of the Family (A/5(/0), and the specific proposals it contained. An important part of the con sions, which the European Union wholeheartedly supported, concerned the universal ratification and implementation of human rights instruments, such as the Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women and the Convention on the Rights of the Child. The European Union also agreed with the view expressed in the above-mentioned report that follow-up activities should be part of a holistic approach to development and social progress, focusing on the local and national levels and being integrated into existing policies and programmes. At the international level, follow-up activities should be in keeping with the implementation of the decisions and recommendations of recent United Nations conferences.

40. Population ageing, which had been observed in the developed regions for several decades, was a phenomenon which could now be found in many developing countries. However, societies could cope with the economic and social challenges posed by demographic changes by taking the growing number and proportion of older persons into account in their medium- and long-term social and economic planning. Faced with a situation without precedent in that area, the General Assembly had decided to observe 1999 as the International Year of Older Persons. The Secretary-General's report on the subject (A/50/114) included some important questions that would have to be taken into account to ensure appropriate preparation for the Year. The European Union was satisfied with the theme proposed for the Year, as it broadly encompassed the situation of older persons. It also believed that the emphasis should be placed on activities at the local and national levels, and that the participation of older persons at all stages of the preparations would be especially important. Finally, the European Union noted that the Department for Policy Coordination and Sustainable Development would serve as the focal point for the Year, which would allow the necessary consideration to be given to the recent results of United Nations conferences and the input of the whole United Nations system to be taken into account.

41. Mrs. TAVARES de ALVAREZ (Dominican Republic) said that in the past decade the United Nations had organized several world conferences and summits in an effort to promote social development and raise living standards. The United Nations should be encouraged to achieve those objectives and helped to overcome

the obstacles which it might meet. The poor, the hungry, the unemployed, children, the ageing, the illiterate, those with disabilities, refugees, displaced persons, men and women unjustly excluded from or marginalized by society would, ultimately, be those who judged whether the enormous human and financial resources assigned to those conferences had been justified.

42. Since 1971, the Commission for Social Development had met every two years. In order for it to do its work and meet its new responsibilities, including the actions resulting from the World Summit, it would have to meet annually. At its thirty-fourth session, the Commission had made recommendations which would strengthen its capacity to apply and closely follow the agreements reached at the Summit. The Economic and Social Council, in resolution 1995/60, had requested the Secretary-General to make arrangements for a special session of the Commission in order to consider the composition of the membership of the Commission, review its mandate and develop a multi-year programme of work to the year 2000. It had also decided that the Commission should adapt its mandate, taking into account the relationship between social and economic development.

43. The Commission for Social Development coordinated all questions relating to ageing and supervised plans and programmes of action, including the International Plan of Action on Ageing. The Dominican Republic, a member of the Commission since 1987, had particularly concerned itself with promoting the integration of older persons into the life of society, a matter which had been left to one side for a long time. Observance of the International Year of Older Persons in 1999 would be the next stage in the development of the Plan of Action on Ageing. The all-encompassing theme of the year: "towards a society for all ages" was an appeal for the participation of all generations and large and small organizations from all sectors of society. The conceptual framework of a programme for the preparation and observance of the Year (A/50/114) was a first, important step towards the integration of each and every member of society.

44. In order to strengthen the Commission's capability, the Dominican Republic would recommend at the special session that the theme "International Year of Older Persons" should be included in the agenda of every session of the Commission up until the year 2000; that explicit reference should be made, as appropriate, to older persons during general monitoring of the follow-up of the Summit's recommendations, particularly with respect to poverty, employment and integration; that contacts should be made between the Commission for Social Development and other operational bodies, including the Commission on Population and Development and the programmes and specialized agencies of the United Nations; that non-governmental organizations and representatives of the private sector interested in the question of ageing should be invited to take part in the Commission's work and that an in-session open-ended ad hoc working group should be established to assist the Commission. She hoped that those suggestions would be supported by all representatives.

45. Mr. BARTNES (Norway), speaking as youth representative of his country, said that neither living conditions and opportunities for youth nor the position of youth issues within the United Nations system had improved in the decade since the observance of International Youth Year in 1985. However, it was encouraging to observe that the United Nations recognized the need for a global youth policy and had produced the draft world programme of action for youth towards the year

2000 and beyond, which would be adopted during the current session of the General Assembly. The programme focused on such questions as AIDS, hunger, unemployment and drug abuse and gave the impression that youth policy was seen merely as a means to prevent a number of problems. The programme should reflect a more positive view of youth.

46. Despite the fact that children and youth constituted the majority of the world's population, their views and problems were still overlooked by Governments and the international community. Modern society excluded youth from politics, administration, business and trade unions, leaving them without an appropriate framework for the expression of their needs. However, their imagination, ideals, energy and vision were essential for the development of the societies in which they lived. The youth of today were the decision makers of tomorrow; by participating constructively at local, regional and global levels and they would gain experience of how democracy worked. Governments should allow them to form their own associations without interference, and encourage them to participate at all levels by providing them with financial and moral support.

47. The United Nations needed young people to succeed in coping with the important challenges facing the United Nations system. Governments should be encouraged to include youth representatives in their delegations to the United Nations General Assembly and other important meetings, as recommended in General Assembly resolution 47/85. The United Nations should provide financial resources to ensure that the Youth Forum of the United Nations system could take place in 1996. In addition, young people should be recognized as a group with special needs and desires. The United Nations and Governments were responsible for applying the world programme of action for youth and for ensuring that future generations would be able to participate actively in building a better world.

48. Mr. KALLEHAUGE (Denmark), head of the International Committee set up by the Danish Council of Organizations of Disabled People and Vice-President of the Nordic Council of Organizations of Disabled People, said that the eradication of poverty, productive employment and social integration, which had been central themes of the World Summit for Social Development in Copenhagen, were highly relevant issues for disabled people. It was gratifying that the disabled had not been excluded from the Summit and many of their problems had been treated in the appropriate context, as was reflected in the final text of the Summit declaration and Programme of Action.

49. The General Assembly had been designated as the principal policy-making and appraisal body on matters relating to follow-up on the Summit. Among the follow-up measures considered most important by both the Danish Government and the non-governmental organizations were designing indicators of social development and improving national capacities in that area. For the disabled, that meant monitoring the implementation of the United Nations Standard Rules on the Equalization of Opportunities for Persons with Disabilities. Since the Standard Rules had been adopted, the Nordic organizations had been considering whether a disability index based on the Standard Rules could be developed as a yardstick for implementing the Rules. The Danish Council of Organizations of Disabled People had developed such a disability index, designed in collaboration

with the Institute of Political Science at Aarhus University (Denmark) and funded by DANIDA, the Danish development agency. That index provided a true and fair picture of the situation in any country at a given time. The major international disability organizations had asked the Danish Council to implement the first global test of what could become a global disability index. Questionnaires had been distributed to the approximately 45 developing countries that were the main receivers of development assistance from the Nordic countries, which, along with the States members of the European Union, made up the group of 20 industrialized countries which would also test the index. It was hoped that the results would be presented in the UNDP Human Development Report.

50. Considering that the major goals of UNDP were to eliminate poverty and build an enabling environment, the international handicapped movement was convinced that persons with disabilities, as the poorest of the poor, were included in the UNDP strategy, and it was looking forward to strengthened cooperation between national organizations of disabled people and the UNDP resident coordinators. Such coordination would create greater equalization of opportunities for persons with disabilities. The Danish Council of Organizations of Disabled People, like its sister organizations in the European Union member States, was preparing proposals for revision of the Treaty on European Union. Denmark had written a clause on equal opportunities for persons with disabilities.

51. Ms. BINDERKRANTZ (Denmark), speaking as the representative of the Danish Youth Council, said that "think globally, act locally" was an appropriate guideline for action in the field of youth. It was crucial to understand that the implementation of the goals established at the World Summit for Social Development and the Fourth World Conference on Women required local action and the development of a democratic culture.

52. Young people could play an important role in the development of such a culture. Therefore, Governments must support and encourage the young people's own initiatives, give them free rein to form their own organizations and provide the necessary framework for different kinds of activities. Governments must also seek to involve the youth and youth organizations in decision-making, particularly in the local communities. Participation in local decisions could provide a good education for young people and serve as an efficient tool for achieving the aims of local development policies. Therefore, international organizations as well as countries in general should make the participation of youth a vital component of their development policies.

53. Young people must be educated in order to become active participants in the shaping of society. Governments should ensure that their school systems included knowledge about the structures of society and democracy and made provision for greater student participation. The non-formal education that could be obtained in non-governmental organizations was a good supplement to the education provided by the formal school system, since young people could take decisions, assume responsibility and learn how to participate in democratic processes in youth organizations.

54. Young people must be educated as global citizens, be made aware of international issues and be involved in international decisions. The United Nations and its agencies must take initiatives to that end as they had already done in connection with the World Youth Forum scheduled for the following year. She also welcomed the fact that more countries than usual would be sending young delegates for the debate on youth scheduled to take place in plenary meetings before the end of the month. She hoped that there would be an increase in the number of countries that found it important to give young people the chance of being heard in the United Nations system, since it was crucial for the youth to be given the opportunity to participate fully in society and to ensure that the commitments made at the World Summit for Social Development led to concrete action.

55. Ms. OUEDRAOGO (Burkina Faso) said that the report of the Secretary-General containing the interim report on the world social situation for 1997 contained a series of recommendations, commitments, programmes of action and plans of action adopted at the major international conferences held by the United Nations in the area of education, women, food, the environment, human rights, population, social development and human settlements. Those conferences had made the international community aware of the deterioration in the social fabric and of the inadequacy of the various models, institutions, policies and programmes that had been applied thus far. Nevertheless, the interim report tended to generalize the progress made in the economic and social fields. The interim report should not comprise a compendium of general facts but should rather be based on an objective analysis of different situations and propose appropriate solutions whenever possible. Moreover, because of their adverse consequences for social development, environmental problems should also be included.

56. Concerning the Copenhagen World Summit for Social Development which had clearly identified actual development problems, some aspects that were essential for the implementation of programmes had been overlooked, especially necessary financial resources. Currently, an appropriate follow-up mechanism needed to be established.

57. As far as literacy was concerned, much still remained to be done in order to achieve the common objective established by the International Literacy Year and the World Conference on Education for All. Burkina Faso endorsed the process of evaluation of achievements in the context of education for all and endorsed the holding of regional meetings to identify successful strategies and methods and to organize exchanges. However, urgent steps needed to be taken to increase school enrolment, especially in sub-Saharan Africa, decrease the drop-out rate, avoid overcrowding in classrooms and improve the quality and content of teaching.

58. Her country had launched a major programme to democratize learning by including in school curricula the teaching of human rights, the basic principles of the Constitution of Burkina Faso, professional ethics and programmes relating to population, the environment and the family. The quantitative and qualitative aims were to raise the school enrolment rate to 40 per cent by 1996 and to improve the quality of teaching through the hiring and training of teaching staff. Burkina Faso's new educational policy was based on two important projects: the opening of satellite schools and non-formal basic education

centres. The aim of those projects was to ensure that the youth who did not receive any schooling or who dropped out early from the traditional educational system received better instruction. The aim of operation "ZANU", designed to combat illiteracy, was to create conditions that were propitious to sustainable economic and social development and to promote the establishment of community organizations.

59. Concerning preparations for the International Year of Older Persons, the Commission for Social Development should consider in detail the four dimensions of ageing listed in document A/50/114, taking into account the different circumstances of older persons especially the most vulnerable among them. She welcomed the proposed theme "Towards a society for all ages" because society should include everyone on the basis of respect for all human rights and fundamental freedoms, cultural and religious diversity and social justice. The proposed timetable should make provision for the holding of regional meetings in order to facilitate coordination and greater efficiency of the work.

60. She welcomed the efforts made by the United Nations Secretariat towards the implementation of the resolution on improving access by disabled persons to buildings, services and sources of information. Such measures should be extended to regional and local offices of the United Nations.

61. The Commission for Social Development should consider the situation of developing countries and, in particular, identify obstacles that prevented the involvement of disabled persons in the activities of their society and find means of eliminating such obstacles. In that regard, the lack of financial resources was, in itself, one of the major obstacles and the Commission and the Group of Experts should make recommendations thereon.

62. Burkina Faso supported the Special Rapporteur's recommendations, and wished to draw attention to action the country had taken, such as reducing the cost of health and transportation, establishing a disability card, setting up solidarity courses and organizing disabled persons into income-generating production associations. Steps had also been taken to facilitate integration of the disabled into the schools at the different levels.

63. Burkina Faso agreed that activities in conjunction with the International Year of the Family should follow a global approach to development and social advancement, and proposed active international coordination of the activities being carried out at the local, national and regional levels. National programmes of actions ought, moreover, to be updated in the light of measures recently taken to benefit the family. Nevertheless, the most important part of the follow-up mechanism was the material, financial and logistical ability of a State to launch its programme of action and achieve the stated goals.

64. Burkina Faso supported the Secretary-General's proposal for a continued expansion of the Voluntary Fund for the International Year of the Family and also underscored the important role to be played by non-governmental organizations in the activities of the Year. The main objective her country had set itself in that respect was to improve the quality of life of each individual within the family unit. The Government had taken steps to make housing more accessible to the population and had started a programme of activities to

promote urbanization. Action on behalf of young people was directed primarily towards preventing delinquency, improving conditions of work and employment, promoting creativity and social and cultural activities and continuing to reintegrate street children into their families, the schools and vocational fields.

65. Ms. OLSZOWSKI (United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization (UNESCO)) said that education was a basic human right and a means towards social achievement. The report of the Secretary-General and the Director-General of UNESCO on the International Literacy Year (A/50/181), gave a realistic mid-decade assessment of progress achieved and difficulties encountered in the pursuit of the goals of the Year. Even though some brilliant results, as recorded in the statistical data in the document, had been scored, they fell far short of the ambitions of the international community and the coalition of United Nations agencies, funds and programmes that had participated in the World Conference on Education for All held in Jomtien, Thailand. An estimated 885 million adults were still illiterate, there was a continuing gender gap and some 129 million school-age children were denied access to primary education. UNESCO, in close cooperation with the Jomtien coalition and other partners, was doing its utmost in that direction.

66. The World Declaration on Education for All adopted at Jomtien on 9 March 1990 emphasized that schooling must be viewed as a means and not as an end. As a follow-up to the Jomtien agreement, the International Consultative Forum on Education for All had been set up to monitor progress towards that goal and to promote consultation and cooperation at the global level. Among the most significant activities undertaken as a follow-up to the Jomtien Conference was the Education for All Summit of the Nine High-Population Countries that had taken place at New Delhi in December 1993, at the invitation of the Government of India and with the support of the United Nations Children's Fund (UNICEF), the United Nations Population Fund (UNFPA) and UNESCO. Those nine countries - Bangladesh, Brazil, China, Egypt, India, Indonesia, Mexico, Nigeria and Pakistan - comprised more than 50 per cent of the world's population and were home to more than 70 per cent of its adult illiterates.

67. In response to the growing concern over the quality of education in many developing countries and specially the least developed among them, UNESCO and UNICEF had commissioned a study that would provide a relatively reliable estimate of the extent and exact nature of such problems. Armed with such information, the international community would be able to devise an appropriate strategy. The hope was that the current historic session of the General Assembly would adopt a resolution taking stock of the prevailing situation and guaranteeing a subsequent review of the work done, possibly at the end of a decade of action, in the year 2001.

68. As part of UNESCO's focus on the education of young people, it had specific projects for street children and young indigenous people. Also, in the case of young girls and women, the Beijing Conference had confirmed UNESCO's long-standing policy of giving highest priority to their education. In Africa, where such needs were most acute, cooperative programmes had been set up with 23 countries in the region specifically to deal with the education of girls. Those

programmes were part of the follow-up to the Pan-African Conference on Education for Girls, held in Burkina Faso in 1993.

69. It was essential for young people to participate in the media. The UNESCO Director-General had co-sponsored with the French Government an International Youth Clearing House and Information Service (INFOYOUTH). In order to make the Service more international in scope, activities had been conducted through various networks established in different regions and countries of the world. Furthermore, UNESCO intended to make a substantial contribution to the world youth programme for action towards the year 2000 and beyond that would be submitted to the General Assembly at its current session, in observance of the fiftieth anniversary of the United Nations.

70. With regard to those with special educational needs, the social policy of the last 20 years had sought to promote the integration and participation of all members of society without exclusion, and that trend must continue. Three UNESCO instruments were of relevance to disabled persons: first, the UNESCO Convention against Discrimination in Education of 1960; secondly, the Sundberg Declaration of 1981; and thirdly, the Salamanca Declaration of 1994. Those instruments gave UNESCO a foundation for ensuring, in close cooperation with its partners, better living conditions for the disabled.

71. UNESCO and the Government of Spain had organized the World Conference on Special Educational Needs in Salamanca, Spain, from 7 to 10 June 1994. The participants had renewed their commitment to education for all and recognized the necessity of providing education for children, young people and adults with special educational needs within the regular school system. Other seminars and meetings had later been held as a follow-up to the Conference. Moreover, the World Summit for Social Development held in Copenhagen in 1995, had also taken up the question of the inclusion of disadvantaged and vulnerable groups in social development. Lastly, UNESCO would in 1996 be submitting a project proposal that would serve as a follow-up plan of action to the Salamanca Conference.

The meeting rose at 6 p.m.